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[Information concerning the chief of the Kede sub-tribe has been placed in category 634. --Analyst]

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623 The meetings (which I have had many opportunities of attending) are quiet and dignified, the discussion flows slowly, no loud word is spoken; the young men are mostly silent, only the elder ones take part. If controversies or disagreements occur, they are never apparent in the discussion itself. Rather they reveal themselves in the disconcerting practice that what had seemed to be happily settled in one discussion will be questioned again in the next; and men whose agreement seemed to be successfully secured to-day will call another meeting of their own to-morrow or the next day and start the discussion all over again.

The appointment to a new rank is a matter of little ceremony. It is identical with the modest ceremonial that accompanies succession to the position of a family head (to be described in a later chapter) with which, in fact, it frequently coincides. Appointments to high *nūsa* ranks usually fall in the long period of mourning for the late holder of the rank, and so exclude any festivity or general celebration. Appointment to a new rank, which would mostly fall to a comparatively young man, is sometimes made the occasion of a little feasting: beer or palm-wine for the guests and a dance in the afternoon and evening to which neighbours, friends, and above all the comrades from the age-grade association are invited. But more often there is nothing; the selected candidate would be summoned to the chief's house before the assembled council of elders, and would be informed that *nw'a gi Tsowa*, 'he had been appointed (lit. had eaten) *Tsowa*', or some other such rank, and that is all. Only by the self-importance with which the new *nūsa* carries himself in the next few days or weeks will you be able to say that this had indeed been an important occasion. If by mistake you address him by his old title, he—or others who know—will put you right at once.

623 609 123 Perhaps I should mention that I have myself gone through this experience when the people of Jebba Island decided to bestow a rank on me, who had become in their eyes a 'full Nupe', and who at any rate was insisting on being treated as one when it came to religious meetings or confidential discussions of village matters. I had to make a few small presents (from which even a 'real' *nūsa*-candidate might not be exempted) to chief and elders; they were 'sitting' for three days, discussing the most suitable title, till eventually the senior *nūsa* informed me that I had been given the title *Shaba* (a very high rank but, needless to say, introduced *ad hoc*, and copied from the rank-list of other villages). A day or two after my appointment I walked through the village and met some people [576] who used the customary greeting for Europeans, *zaki*; but my companions called the people sharply to order, informing them that I was *Shaba* of Jebba now, which information at once elicited the greeting corresponding to the *Shaba* rank, *gbako nyenkpa* (body of iron). In a week or two there was nobody within ten miles of the place who did not know of my new rank.

CHIEFTAINSHIP

622 184 Chieftainship in Nupe is, like the system of *nūsa* ranks, characterized by the coexistence of two systems of succession: promotion and hereditary succession. In Jebba and Mokwa the chief's rank is merely the

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highest in the order of village ranks, and one of the senior elders of the village is promoted to the position of the chief. In all other areas chieftainship is hereditary and bound up with one 'house'. Chieftainship of the promotion type goes invariably hand in hand with a rank system of promotion type. But hereditary chieftainship does not invariably imply hereditary *nūsa* ranks. In Dibo country, for example, chieftainship is hereditary, but the *nūsa* ranks in some villages follow promotion. The elected chief is by no means regarded as less closely identified with the village which he 'owns' than the hereditary chief. The rule that he assumes the name of 'his' village as title holds good both for elected and hereditary chiefs: the *Gebba* of Jebba (Gebba) is, as we have just seen, an elected chief.

Neither chieftainship by election nor hereditary chieftainship implies an automatic, rigidly fixed, succession. Under the former, any elder who has reached an important rank is eligible for the final promotion. The latitude which this arrangement allows is illustrated in the succession to the chieftainship in Mokwa, where, in the case of the last five chiefs, the following rank-holders were elected as chiefs: *Sámaza*, the fourth on the village rank-list, *Sojekó*, the second on the village rank-list, *Majī Bagidi*, the eighth, and *Sarkin Zongu*; this last rank, borrowed from Hausa, has been abandoned during the régime of the present chief. It was attached to the position of a caretaker in the camp prepared for the trading caravans stopping at Mokwa—a responsible and lucrative, though from traditional point of view inferior, post. (See chart I, p. 54.)

Hereditary succession to chieftainship follows the same elastic rule which governs succession to hereditary *nūsa* ranks.[1] A few communities have adopted the practice of appointing beforehand the successor to chieftainship, an 'heir presumptive', mostly known by the title *Shaba*. But it can be shown that this practice is of comparatively recent origin, in fact, a copy of the system of succession characteristic of Nupe kingship. The larger the family group or 'house' of the hereditary chief, the more scope there is for the selection of a fitting successor. Expansion of the chieftain family may lead to a splitting-up of the 'house' as a result of which the chief's office, vested in two or more related houses, is taken in rotation by these families. In at least one case hereditary succession itself was abandoned, and replaced by free election: in Doko the line of hereditary succession was interrupted two generations ago, and a 'new man', a man of outstanding ability, was appointed as successor by the old chief and accordingly 'elected' later by the elders of the village. The genealogy of the Doko chiefs (p. 52) up to the appointment of this 'new man' may illustrate the latitude allowed even in strictly hereditary chieftainship. We see that sons, grandsons, younger brothers, and brothers' sons are all equally admitted to the succession of village chieftainship.

The appointment or election of the new chief is a matter for the council of elders. It is presided over by a certain *nūsa* of high rank who is in many places called *Ndeji* (a corrupted form of *Ndeži*, viz. *nda eži*),

[1] In one village, Etsú, I found matrilineal succession to hereditary chieftainship, through the mother's brother's son, although in all other respects the rules of inheritance were the same as everywhere else in Nupe. I am unable to explain this isolated instance, unless perhaps historically.

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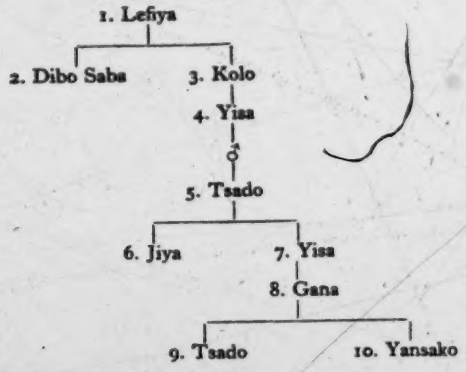
Genealogy of Doko Chiefs



Father of the Town, and who stands somewhat apart from the other village ranks. He plays the part of the chief 'elector' or 'king-maker'; he is never himself a candidate for chieftainship, but is entrusted with the rule of the village during the interregnum. We shall hear more of him presently. The Nupe dislike a long interregnum: as a rule only a few weeks, filled out with discussions and the consultation of diviners, elapse before the appointment of a new chief.[1] This appointment will eventually need the confirmation of the *Etsu* Nupe and, to-day, of the Administrative Officer. This last rule, however, applies only to those chiefs who are recognized as official Village Heads under the modern Native Administration. In the reorganization of the Emirate under British rule only the larger villages have been created seats of official Village Heads. Their number does not comprise all the places which are 'villages' or 'towns' in traditional native conception.[2] A significant terminological dualism has been the result: the people speak of *Zitsu*, 'town-king', when referring to their traditional, officially unrecognized, chief, and call the officially appointed Village Head *Etsu Nyenkpa*, 'Money Chief' (i.e. tax chief).

I can offer no explanation for the coexistence of these two different systems of chieftainship, of hereditary and promotion type. There is no evidence of either having developed from the other. Nor can local conditions, economic factors, or the factors of size and population be made responsible. But I could discover the sociologically interesting correlation between the system of succession and the religious elements which surround Nupe chieftainship. In the villages where chieftainship is hereditary we find that vague mythology of origin which tells of the first occupation of the land, and of the foundation of the village by the

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[1] I have been told that formerly unanimity between the various diviners of the village was considered necessary. In Mokwa my informants stated that the normal duration of the 'interregnum' is ten days.

[2] In connexion with a scheme to raise the salary of Village Heads the number of Village Headships in Bida Emirate has recently been further reduced.

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ancestor of the present chief. A certain special magic and sacred insignia are linked with the house in which chieftainship is vested. Thus the chiefs of various Beni villages and of Sakpe possess the brass bangles of Tsoede; chiefs in Dibo country an iron staff; chiefs in the riverain area the sacred chain of Tsoede. The magic ritual which is associated with chieftainship varies as widely: in Doko it is a harvest rite, the 'eating of the bulrush-millet'; in other villages it appears as magic against barrenness, as a rain sacrifice, an ordeal, or as a general rite to secure health and prosperity of the community. But invariably the chief's ritual, whatever its more specific aim, will be performed as funeral rite and ceremony of installation of chiefs, and also whenever certain great calamities befall the community—a drought, famine, or epidemic. The chief is not himself the priest of this magic, and often has not the insignia in his own possession. Insignia and magic are entrusted to another member of the chief's family. The office of the *Žigi*, the village priest, is kept in the junior branch of the chieftain house, and *Žitsu* and *Žigi*, Town-king and Town-priest, appear in the genealogies as elder and younger brother (in the classificatory sense).[1]

In the communities, on the other hand, where the chief is elected from the senior rank-holders, his house 'owns' no special magic or insignia, and there is no mythology of a founder of the village, but tradition speaks of the village as having 'always been there'. The religious duties fall, instead, to the *nūsa* who acts as chief 'elector' and who is entrusted with the rule of the village during an interregnum. This man's office will be hereditary and sacred, he will own insignia or a special powerful magic, which is, again, invoked at the death and the appointment of chiefs or in the case of great calamities. A supernatural agency, a mystic safeguard, is thus always assumed behind the chief's authority. But Nupe village organization has evolved two different solutions, in accordance with the two different systems of chieftain succession: one makes the chief or his family the agents of the supernatural power which supports the claim to chieftainship; the other separates the political rule from the mystic safeguard and, instead of a hereditary king, brings into being a hereditary 'king-maker'. (See chart II, p. 55).

This division of religious and secular office seems to eliminate effectively conflicts between chief and priest. The priests of the village cults, experts in religious matters only, have no influence in political affairs; they are, as we saw, not even granted the general prerogative of their age: a seat on the council of elders. The priest of the chief's cult, if of the chief's family, is classed as a 'younger brother' and thus equally barred from the position of an influential elder. Only the priest-king-maker (where he exists) could gain the position of a rival power and interfere with secular affairs. However, by his office the main 'elector' of the chief, he should be a supporter and ally of the chief, whose office reflects to some extent his own authority, rather than his adversary or rival. He may prefer a puppet at the head of the village—I saw an instance

[1] See the genealogy given in chart II, p. 55.

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II

Rank System from Doko (Hereditary Type)

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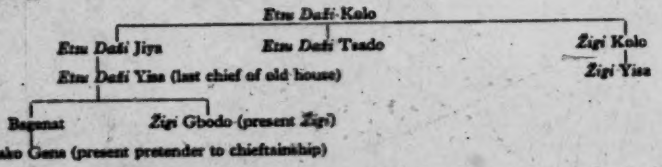
Rank order	*Title*	*Office*	*Locality ('efu')*	*Succession*	*Insignia, magic, &c.*	*Remarks*
1	*Etsu Dafi*	Chief	Dafi	Hereditary	Sacred bangles, chief's ritual	*Zigi* (priest) is of chief's family.[1]
2	*Shabe*	..	In *tunga*	A relation of chief, promoted to present rank from *Lile* at death of late *Shabe*, 1935	..	Newly introduced title, copied from Bida ranks.
3	*Lile*	Formerly 'Heir Presumptive'	Dafi	Present holder chief's younger brother	..	..
4	*Kpotsi*	..	"	Present holder chief's elder brother (died 1936)	..	Newly introduced title, copied from Bida.
5	*Maki*	..	"	Tentatively introduced (see p. 56)	..	As 2 and 4
6	*Ndefie*	..	Edoko	Hereditary in one 'house'	..	..
7	*Dooko*	..	Takogi	"	..	..
8	*Boke*	..	Kpacinefu	"	..	..
9	*Shabatsi*	..	Ndadofu	"	..	..
10	*Bodo*	..	Dafi	"	..	..
11	*Zitsu Bebi*	..	Edoko	"	..	..
12	*Maji*	..	"	"	..	..
13	*Maji Egbe* (or *Ndace*)	Head of Hunters	"	"	..	..

[1] The typical relationship between *Zitsu* and *Zigi*, chief and priest of the chief's ritual, as described above exists no longer, as the present chief comes from a new family. The relationship between chief and priest as it existed in the original chief's dynasty is shown in the attached genealogy.



of this: a young man, son of the late chief, but inexperienced, timid and unintelligent, had been put forward as candidate by the 'king-maker', himself a shrewd and keen man, when the Administration looked for a successor to the vacant chieftainship of Sakpe. (The young chief, whose rule not unnaturally proved a failure, was deposed after two years.) But such cases are rare. As a rule the division of secular and priestly office works out harmoniously. Only once did I find an open conflict; but it revealed, not a failure of the established system, but rather a departure from it, brought about by extraneous influences.

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It was the case of the chiefs of Doko, to which I have already referred. Here the kinship bond between chief and priest, *Zitsu* and *Zigi*, had been dissolved when the new family succeeded to the chieftainship. The priest of the chief's ritual became, from the priestly partner in the two-fold office of chieftainship, an independent, and thus dangerous, agent. The descendant of the original chief's family, a young man, Ndakó Gana by name, used the spiritual power vested in his house as a weapon

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622 793 578 against the ruling chief whom he regarded as an usurper. He refused the chief the use of the sacred insignia—the bangles of Tsoede—without which the annual chief's ritual cannot be performed. Finally, in 1934, he asked me to intervene for him so that he should be given official authority to keep in his possession the invaluable insignia, which the chief was demanding back not so much for religious reasons (for some of his brothers and sons were already posing as Mohammedans), as in order to deprive the rival family of this convincing evidence of their claim to the rule of Doko. The case remained undecided, and the rivalry between the two men unrelieved, till in 1936 the chief offered the 'pretender' official recognition of a sort, namely, the title *Makũ*. The highest rank next to the chief's, *Shaba*, had just fallen vacant, and a reshuffle of titles had taken place. Ndakó Gana, however, rejected the title *Makũ*—a new title, introduced *ad hoc* (copied from the dynastic ranks in Bida)—as a meaningless, makeshift sort of rank and demanded instead the rank of *Shaba* itself. The deadlock was finally overcome by an appeal of both parties to the *Etsu*; he managed to persuade the young man to accept the offered rank, at least as an earnest, and as more fitting to his age.

VILLAGE GOVERNMENT

622 The tasks of government which fall to the village chief are these:

1. He appoints the village elders from the ranks of the family heads and is thus bound, as by a constitution in the modern sense, to accept their co-operation and advice in all matters of village government.
2. He controls the land resources of the community and in this capacity apportions farm-land, trees, fishing rights, and levies certain tributes and land dues from the families holding village land. With this aspect of village government we shall deal later on in detail, in the chapter on land-tenure.
3. He is not, as we have seen, the religious head of the community. But he organizes, directly or indirectly, and partly finances, certain religious rites linked with chieftainship.
4. He arbitrates in litigation and wields (though now only on a limited scale) a certain informal judicial power.
5. He organizes all large-scale co-operation and concerted action of the village community.

We have already spoken of the composition of the village council and the co-operation between chief and elders. Let me add some concrete data to illustrate the working of the village 'constitution'.

627 A Doko farmer had quarrelled with a neighbour over some trees; people from a village near Mokwa came into Mokwa to borrow masks for the *elo* ritual which they were going to perform, having lost their own masks; a family head in Sakpe accused his sister's son who lived in his house of having stolen rice from his farm; a girl in Laboži denounced two strangers who had been given hospitality by a neighbour and whom she saw stealing their host's clothes; a young man in Jebba accused his wife of adultery; another man in Jebba complained that a certain hunter

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651 621 activity that exists in the village: common labour and communal ceremonies and sacrifices, fights and wars in pre-European times, and tax-collection for the modern Native Administration. Tax-collection in the village has become a little ritual of its own, interesting enough to be described here. Some time before the N.A. lorry is expected from Bida on its periodical tax-collecting visits you will find the chief sitting in his house, or in a booth in the market, surrounded by the people who have come to pay their tax. The two or three head *nūsaži* will sit with him. The 'tax Mallam', who is attached to the Village Head as scribe and 'accountant', makes entries in his little book and is busy writing out tax receipts. Little heaps of coins pile up before them. On this day the normal routine of village life is interrupted: the men do not go to their farms and often forgo their midday meal at home, and even a ceremony that might fall in that time will be postponed until the 'tax ritual' has been concluded.

621 A large proportion of co-operative village work is done to-day by the order of the N.A.: the repair of a rest-house, the clearing of a motor-road, &c. But the concerted action of the village community is still as efficient in spontaneous, unsolicited work. I have seen the men of a village repairing a bush bridge leading to their farms a day or two after the news that it had been swept away by floods was reported to the chief. And although there exists to-day an efficient body of N.A. police, in an [694] emergency it falls frequently enough to the people of a village to organize the pursuit of a criminal and to escort him to the District Head—a task which the young men at least undertake with efficiency and relish.

BALANCE OF POWER

622 623 661 To repeat: the village elders are the mouthpiece and the agents of the chief, through whom his orders reach the community; and they are also, in turn, the informants on whom the chief depends, and the mouthpiece of the people whom they represent both in their official capacity and as heads of kinship and local groups. Again we may call the chief a symbol of the collective identity of the village community, in the sense that, through his orders, he expresses its collective will and interests. Yet the degree of perfection which this political system, with its well-planned harmonious co-operation between chief and elders, attains in practice varies considerably. Autocratically inclined chiefs find means to evade the check on their power which an efficient council of elders implies. We have spoken of certain chiefs who appointed their friends and favourites to the position of titled elders in disregard of more legitimate claims, thus creating for themselves a personal following in the village council. I was told of chiefs who in the past have overridden the authority of the elders, levying tribute and refusing legitimate grants of land, until the elders appealed to the overlord of the country, the *Etsu* Nupe, against their overbearing ruler. If they failed to obtain the support of the king, my informants added, they would carry on as if there were no chief—go on strike, as it were. I have myself witnessed all variations possible in this fight for balance of power: an autocratic chief who

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seemed to have managed perfectly to turn his elders into mere puppets; a chief (the chief of Doko) whose overbearing behaviour caused a *tunga* group to refuse him the customary 'tithe' of fish caught in a pond on their territory; and also a chief who had tried, in the appointment of a rank-holder, to go against the majority of his council, but was brought to heel by the organized 'strike' of the elders: this happened in Kutigi, where, during the great Mohammedan festivals, the elders declined to attend the traditional ceremonial gathering in the chief's house until he gave in rather than prolong this assault on his prestige. That this religious 'strike' concerns a Mohammedan ceremony is incidental. Refusal to co-operate in established ceremonial activities may well check a chief's high-handedness (though I have not seen another case of this kind): the congregation is as indispensable as the 'owner' of a special magic and the chief organizer and 'financier' of communal rites.

Into the problem of political balance enters yet another factor—the economic aspect of chieftainship. The ability of the chief to free himself from all checks on his authority may depend ultimately on the economic resources of which he can avail himself—of the economic resources, that is, allowed him by the village constitution. (We may leave out of account for a moment the existence of the supreme control of village chieftainship by the overlord of the country.) Having to appoint the heads of family groups to the position of village elders, the chief cannot eliminate completely these agents of 'public opinion'. But decisive economic superiority may spell political power uncontrolled—the ability to win over, bribe, or force opponents into submission.

The political power of the chief is sustained by a number of important economic privileges. First, the chief receives (or rather used to receive) a land-tax in kind, known by the Arabic-Hausa name *dzankd*, 'tithe', from every family head. He also receives a certain gift in kind, or sometimes money, when allotting land to new tenants. The nature of this payment as a gift and not as a regular tax is expressed in the rule that on its receipt the chief has to make the usual small return gift with which the Nupe always dismiss a bearer of presents. A special right to fruit-bearing trees assigns to the chief a source of income not available to other members of the community. The communal farm-work, *egbe*, which the Nupe farmers carry out for one another is always performed first, and on the largest scale, on the chief's farms, so that he can count regularly on a larger and more docile team of workers than any other citizen of the village. Finally, the chief has special rights to the fish caught in the ponds or backwaters in his territory, and to certain game killed by the hunters of his village. As regards the former, he again claims *dzankd*, tithe, of every catch; hunters have to surrender to him the skins of leopards or lions, or meat of leopard and lion, or one leg of a buffalo—here the rules vary locally.

Some of these prerogatives have disappeared to-day. The general money tax of the Emirate has replaced the former land fees and tithes. Besides, the chiefs of larger places, official Village Heads under the N.A., receive a fixed salary. Only in a few small villages the annual gift in kind has survived, though reduced in amount and only in the nature of a

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voluntary present. It is, I was told, only the 'old men who are still doing it'. The value of the right to communal farm-work has also lost its former importance. A number of salaried Village Heads have abandoned almost completely their former agricultural work, being too busy with their official duties. One village chief, who is District Head at the same time (in Kacha), has found it impossible to spare even his sons and brothers for farm-work, needing them as messengers and the like. Instead, he has adopted the most recent innovation in Nupe economics, and engages wage-labour to work his land. The chiefs of small villages, however, who draw no wages, and have been given no official position under the N.A., have lost the most important of the old economic prerogatives—unless their people voluntarily continue the old practice—without benefiting from the new. Only the right to special fruit-bearing trees, game, and fishing has survived everywhere without change. It is not surprising, therefore, that the old term *Žitsu* is more and more losing its splendour, overshadowed by the matter-of-fact term *Etsu Nyenkpa*, Money or Tax Chief. And often the small chiefs, who have been passed over in the political reorganization of the Emirate,[1] tell you that to-day there is little difference between chief and commoners.

622 How far did the former economic prerogatives in reality establish a definite, unassailable economic superiority of the chief? The approach to this question must be through the comparison between traditional income and expenditure of chief and elders respectively. Here we see that some of the economic prerogatives of the chief are shared (though in lesser degree) by the other family heads and titled elders. The *nūsaži*, like the chief, have a right to the possession of fruit-bearing trees; they too can avail themselves of communal farm-work—though only after the chief. And if they have a large family, many sons and younger brothers helping in the farm-work, their normal income may not be very much lower than the chief's. Of the economic prerogatives of the chief only the land-tithe (or its modern counterpart, the chief's salary) and the game and fishing rights are exclusive to his official position. The game rights contribute mainly to the symbols of chieftain status—the possession of a leopard or lion skin, allowed only to the chief. The additional capital resources vested in chieftainship—additional in the sense that they are unavailable to ordinary family heads—were thus derived in the main from the tithe.[2] I have calculated that the annual land-tithe of a village the size of Doko would amount to about seventy bundles of corn—twice the annual yield upon which an average peasant household could reckon.[3] Now, on this evidence we are justified in saying that the

[1] See p. 52.

[2] Certain other irregular forms of income it is impossible to estimate to-day: occasional land fees from new tenants, fines or gifts from parties between whom the chief was arbitrating. Moreover, certain chiefs received a small share of the tax money they levied for the *Etsu* Nupe (see p. 116); but this last income, derived from the kingdom, no longer reflects the village system as such.

[3] There is a certain margin of error in this calculation. The constant extension and subdivision of Nupe family groups and households make it impossible to define with any precision the size of the households originally responsible for the payment of the tithe. I have taken an average of the larger groups, such as are

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chief's special income did not, normally, constitute an insurmountable economic barrier between himself and his subjects. This is further shown by the fact that the characteristic possessions of a chief—possession of things generally valued in the society—were not unattainable by others.

His surplus income the chief uses as follows: some of it he must devote to special expenditure attached to his office, the purchase of a goat or fowl for the annual sacrifices, or some other large contribution (larger than that of the other family heads) towards the cost of the village ceremonies. Occasional liberal presents to the elders, food, kola-nuts, beer, gowns are also indicated; a niggardly chief is much disliked. The larger part of his income the chief spends on himself, his family, and generally on things the possession of which are demanded by his status and prestige. Some chiefs, with a view to profit as well as prestige, have bought slaves or taken pawns. Every bigger chief possesses at least one horse. His dress is always of the more expensive kind—embroidered trousers, a turban, and an indigo-dyed gown, possibly an embroidered Bida robe. Many chiefs possess the beautifully carved staffs which are made by the craftsmen in the river valley and sold for sums up to two pounds. One or another chief owns an old flintlock gun, and some chiefs pride themselves on building bigger and more ornate houses than the majority of the people possess. Finally, as the most conspicuous symbol of economic advantage in this country of extremely high bride-price, two at least of the bigger chiefs I met had what among the Nupe peasants is considered a very large number of wives (5 or 6 as against the usual 1 or 2), and so had some of their sons and younger brothers.

Set against this the economic position of a well-to-do family head and rank-holder. He too used to own slaves or pawns. The higher rank-holders often possess large, imposing houses. They carry carved staffs, own a horse, turban and state gown, and a gun. Some of them may have three or four wives. With regard to the accoutrements of his office—the religious elements linked with chieftainship, its insignia and symbols of rank—the chief stands on a plane by himself; as regards things 'that money can buy', or liquid capital, he is placed only one step higher than his citizens of rank. The surplus capital which he derives from his office is not, as we can see, large enough to be turned into an effective instrument of political ambition.

Involved in this is the question how far the temporary economic benefits linked with the chief's office can be used so as to be turned into a lasting economic advantage, enjoyed by the descendants and the whole family of the chief. For the communities in which succession to chieftainship follows promotion or rotation the question answers itself: the surplus income vested in the chief's office is not sufficient, once acquired, to endow his whole 'house' permanently with economic superiority.[1] In

presided over by the *nūsa* ranks, and the smaller family groups (approximately 100 in number) with which we should have to reckon to-day.

[1] Here is a significant illustration: in Mokwa and Jebba, two villages of 'promotion type', the imposing houses of the late chiefs have fallen into disrepair; the descendants are no longer able to command the communal labour without which the upkeep of the large house is impossible.

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hereditary chieftainship, the accumulation of surplus renders such development more likely. But even here the existence of the special chief's cult, which imposes additional expenses on the chief (higher than in the case of cults to which he need only contribute his share), should tend to adjust more equitably the economic balance between chief and elders.[1]

However, we have other evidence to show that the chief's position, economically privileged though it may be, is not *meant* to lead to the formation of an essentially different, sharply separated, permanently privileged ruling class; evidence, in other words, to show that the political organization of the village is meant to preserve the social homogeneity of its community. This evidence lies in the rules of etiquette defining the behaviour of the people towards their chief. People everywhere show reverence to their chief: they kneel down by the door when entering his presence. Often there are raised platforms in the chief's entrance hut, near the door leading to the inner part of the house, on which he would sit, while the others are squatting on the ground in front of him. Or the chief would sit on a leopard skin or at least a cow-hide, while the others are assigned seats on grass-mats. The chief, finally, is addressed by special formulae of greeting reserved for his title. Yet again, this attitude of reverence represents only the highest grade of respect as it is shown similarly to all *nũsaži*, graded in accordance with age and rank. In every house young men or visitors of lower status and seniority would squat near the door while the head of the house, or honoured guests, occupy places on the inner side—the more honoured side. Special greetings of the same symbolic nature as the salute reserved for the chief are typical of the various ranks. Here as in the case of economic privileges etiquette marks off the chief not as standing on 'a plane by himself' but merely as the most prominent in a graded order of prominence. If on state occasions, wearing his state robe and turban, the chief is conspicuously marked off from the rest of the people, when going out to his farms there is nothing to distinguish him from an ordinary farmer; like him he carries his hoe across the shoulder, a straw hat on his head, and wears only the cheap blue cloth slung loosely round the body. There is thus ample 'neutral ground' in the matter of etiquette and distinction of status between chief, elders, and the rest of the people.

But above all, the attitude of reverence and the special chief's salute are reserved for the chief's person; they are not enjoyed equally by his relations merely in virtue of their being his relations. The exalted social position of the chief does not extend to his family—there exist, even in hereditary chieftainship, no symbols of a hereditary class differentiation. Later, in the discussion of social classes in the kingdom, we shall understand fully the significance of this 'democratic' element in Nupe village chieftainship.

[1] In 1936 the chief of Doko bought five sheep for sacrifices connected with the 'chief's cult', contributed beer to other ceremonies, and presented two gowns to men with whom he was anxious to keep on good terms—not counting occasional small gifts and contributions, e.g. to family feasts, &c. Altogether an expenditure of approximately £2–3, or 30 to 40 bundles of corn, that is, roughly half of his income from tithe.

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There is one exception—which proves the rule. In Kutigi all the members of the chief's family are addressed as *wacī*, 'Great Ones', and though not shown special reverence are regarded somewhat as a class apart. The explanation is this: the rulers of Kutigi come from an alien group, those Bornu immigrants to whom I have referred already. Owing to their economic and educational advantages (they were Mohammedans in a pagan and rather primitive country) they had established themselves as the dominant group, and the leaders of the immigrants became the political rulers of the original inhabitants. In this position they were confirmed by the *Etsu* Nupe. In the Fulani dynasty of Nupe the Benu had an example close at hand how an alien group could arrogate to itself the position of a hereditary ruling caste. They followed it in every detail: from the Fulani kings they adopted the salutation *wacī*; and like them they managed that the recognition of social superiority was extended not only to the actually ruling chief but to his whole kinship group—a whole hereditary ruling class.

BINDING FORCES

Let us try, in conclusion, to define the specific nature of the political unity achieved in the Nupe village. It must be emphasized, first of all, that it *is* a specific unity, and that it is achieved by mechanisms peculiar to itself. In other words, political organization is not—as is the case in many primitive societies—simply absorbed by religion, magic, or kinship, and the mechanisms of control which these domains of culture entail. Nor is it, on the other hand, possessed of any of the conspicuous instruments of political control which characterize other societies: a police or military executive, a disproportionate chieftain power, or an elaborate apparatus of coercion. Moreover, the connexion between political control and religious and kinship agencies is very close. Political organization delegates to the kinship system the important task of providing the executive organs for the community in the persons of the *nūsaźi*, who, as we have seen, are village elders and family heads in one. And religious beliefs and practices supply the spiritual sanction of chieftainship and authority in general. But as important as these specific contributions of religion and kinship are certain less specific influences, by means of which both religion and kinship help to sustain the system of political control. Thus encouragement of intermarriage within the village community adds the strength of interlocked kinship relations to political ties; and the communal religious rites exercise, and underline in their own impressive fashion, the unit of the village group.[1] They do it consciously and openly: their dedication to the support of the village community expresses itself in the prayer formula which occurs in every religious ritual whatever its avowed purpose or the occasion of its performance: *eźi u de lafiya*, 'may the village prosper'. Political control, kinship, and religion thus define coextensive social units. Only because

[1] This interdependence of political unit and religious congregation is analysed more explicitly in the case of the *gunnu* cult. (J.R.A.I., lxvii, 1937, pp. 91–130.)

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621 182 of this coextensiveness of the spheres of religious and political control could the village elders of Kutigi to whose 'strike' we referred above effect that political adjustment by religious pressure. And again only because of this coextensiveness of the spheres of political and kinship control could, in another instance, a family head be excluded from the ranks of the titled elders on the grounds that one of his sons had twice been caught thieving. The family head was identified with the moral standards obtaining in the kinship group the headship of which would have entitled him, in the normal case, to a position in the political executive. 'How can a man who cannot keep order in his own house,' said my informant, 'keep order in the village?' But these three agencies of control are only three in a multiplicity of coextensive forms of social organization: economic pursuits, the contacts of everyday life, recreation, education. The political activities take place within this one area of common life. Expressed in one formula: the political system and the closely knit social life of a single community organize an identical human substratum.

Here we may, in parenthesis, touch upon the theoretically interesting question whether this system of 'multiple control' which the political organization is capable of utilizing can be taken to explain the absence, in the case of the Nupe village, of the more conspicuous specifically political instruments of control. However, this question cannot be solved on the basis of Nupe material alone. For here the issue is confused by the fact that the state organization, superimposed upon the village system, obviates the necessity of the more essential of these instruments, especially with respect to legal and military executive. Indeed, the fact that the state removes graver legal cases from village jurisdiction releases the social system of the village from certain social pressure which must otherwise have necessitated a more strongly marked specific political authority.

621 622 182 This brings us to the question of the resistance of this delicately balanced system of multiple control to outside influences and, generally, the influence of change. Its efficiency is clearly a function of the uniformity of social interests obtaining in the community. It will fail as soon as the closeness of community life is broken by a strong divergence of interest. Extraneous changes creating new aims which are apt to dissociate the political executive from the rest of the people may disturb its equilibrium, which could then be readjusted only by a corresponding strengthening, at the cost of the other agencies in the multiple machinery of control, of political power as such. The most radical adjustment of this kind is that brought about by the modern political changes which, in accordance with the system of Indirect Rule, have turned the village chief into an official agent of the Administration. In this capacity he may have to give orders, enforce laws, and exact actions unpopular with his people. He is bound to stand for aims and interests which may threaten to estrange him from the community. An inconsiderate Administrative Officer may still more widen the rift. Twice I have come across chiefs who, in their official capacity and by the order of a District Officer, had to forbid all dances and festivities in a district which was

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behindhand with the tax, at a time when he should have organized, as chief, the village rituals that precede the harvest.

As long as a chief in his capacity as a paid official of the N.A. organizes common labour for road-work—the value of which the Nigerian peasant is soon coming to realize—the capture of a criminal, or certain obvious hygienic practices, he will be backed by public opinion. But when enforcing an unpopular tax, pressing children for the Government schools (which was frequently enough the case a few years ago), or—a case I witnessed myself—sentencing to a fine in accordance with some ambitious by-law a man who had been defecating on the public road, his authority no longer serves the accepted common interests and can no longer reckon with common approval.[1] Here the backing by the Administration must provide the extra power which is to weigh the scales in favour of the chief and to reset the political balance between chief and community. Here and there the Administration even felt compelled to replace a traditional chief, who proved incapable of carrying out the tasks which his position under the N.A. assigned to him, by a more willing or more enlightened man, possibly one who had had the advantage of education and could thus better see the 'white man's' viewpoint.[2] But this solution was not an unqualified success: Government backing was not capable of making up for the loss of the moral unity which supports the traditional chief in the execution of his traditional duties.

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The case of the present chief of Jebba Island is an illuminating instance—although here the Administration is only indirectly responsible for the departure from the traditional rules of chieftainship. After the death of the last *Gebba*, who was said to have been a rather inefficient Village Head, a complete outsider was appointed as chief, a stranger who had been living for some time in the late *Gebba*'s house and had been acting for him as semi-official messenger in his dealings with the District Head at Mokwa. It was on the advice of the District Head that he was made the new Village Head. The District Head, himself a stranger who did not know the local situation, preferred to have a man he knew for his subordinate, and a man who had been to the Government School and who was, incidentally, a Mohammedan like himself. Elders and 'king-maker' were not consulted. The village elder who would have been appointed chief if the latter had had their way held at the time the title *Wangwa*. He set up something like an independent rule of his own. Except for official business—tax-collection in particular—the people ignored the other, shadow chief, completely. An unhealthy situation arose and was left to exist for two years, during which time there was no real authority in the village, and legal offences and unruly conduct in general were increasing rapidly. In 1935 I had the opportunity of drawing the attention of the Administration to this fact. The man *Wangwa* was recognized officially as a 'second-in-command' and prospective

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[1] This case happened in a community half Yoruba and half Nupe. The progressive chief was a Yoruba, the victim (who came to me to complain) a Nupe. I could, in fact, hardly imagine a Nupe chief to be sufficiently appreciative of hygienic principles to take such a step.

[2] This happened twice, in Jebba Island and Sakpe.

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621 622 182 successor to the chieftainship (it being thought inadvisable to depose the once appointed chief). At the same time the elders promoted him to the highest village rank next to the chief's, *Tsadú*. Having been granted this responsible position in the village government, the ex-rival of the chief seems prepared to use his influence and moral power in support of the official Village Head whom he may succeed some day.

This book cannot venture to answer the question how far the authority of the traditional chief can be strained without alienating him from the people and the elders, or without forcing the latter to abandon their role as free spokesmen of the community and become mere pawns of the chief.[1] But it must be said that in many respects the adoption of new governmental duties by the traditional chiefs is proceeding smoothly and efficiently. This readjustment seems due less to political measures as such than to the comprehensive effectiveness of culture change, which gradually diminishes certain divergences in the views to which the political executive is committed and those of the people themselves. Already many Nupe villagers appreciate medical help and education, and are sending their children to school without pressure from the chief.

For completeness' sake we must add that the balance of 'multiple control' may be endangered also by the opposite development, namely a separation between political executive and community in which the latter represents the new extraneous influences. For individuals or sections of the community may dissociate themselves from the unity of common life, alienated by modern education, new economic enterprise, or conversion to Christianity, and may thus no longer be amenable to the traditional authorities. However, this danger has not yet arisen in the Nupe village, chiefly because the 'progressive' elements flock to the town rather than stay in the village, and also because Christian influence is inconsiderable.

621 622 182 631 Yet it would be a mistake to assume that the factors that weaken the homogeneous village community are all of recent date and the results of modern colonial development. Disturbances of the 'balance' very similar to those just described, and like them entailing a strengthening from outside, as it were, of the chief's authority, were also at work in the pre-British Nupe kingdom. They are embodied in the very existence of the kingdom as a political and social superstructure which is the carrier of new values and new, manifold, cultural influences.

First the purely political factors. We have heard of the insignia and emblems of chiefly power which, according to tradition, were bestowed on village chiefs by the ancestor-king of Nupe; the most ancient form of

[1] It is possible that in communities in which the 'multiple' system of control is less delicately adjusted, and the political authority of the chief more independent of the other principles governing community life, the political power of chief and elders can be used more freely for new tasks. This adds, I think, a new meaning to the following statement by Sir Donald Cameron: 'The Native Authorities Ordinance also makes provision for the limitation in particular instances of the powers which may be exercised by a Native Authority, for some of these are well organized and experienced while others are of . . . weaker mould.' ('Native Administration in Nigeria and Tanganyika', *Journal of the Royal African Society*, xxxvi, Supplement, p. 13.)

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village chieftainship is thus thought of as an office held 'by the grace of the king'. I have also mentioned that the appointment of the village chief is subject, to-day as of old, to confirmation by the *Etsu* Nupe.[1] The chief thus becomes the official representative of the king, responsible to him for law and order and the collection of tax, but also able to rely on his sovereign's spiritual or political support. The people of the village can appeal to the *Etsu* if they are dissatisfied with their chief, and in the case of rival claims to chieftainship the king would be called upon to decide between the claimants—a role which he did not always undertake impartially; bribes offered by a chief threatened with the loss of his position or a new claimant would easily influence his decision.[1] The control of the king over his chiefs is expressed already in the ceremonial of the appointment. The chief-elect, accompanied by the head elders, would be summoned to the capital to receive his appointment and to be vested with a gown, turban, and sandals as insignia of his office, in a ceremony which closely resembles the investiture of officers of state or members of the royal nobility. The *Etsu* Nupe may also be called in to arbitrate in internal disputes, e.g. over the succession to local ranks —we remember the example from Doko. Lastly, legal cases come under the jurisdiction of the *Etsu* and his appointed agents, thus removing from the orbit of the community the right to see offences punished and retaliation achieved.

Another source of 'disturbance' lies in the impact of Islam. It led in many cases to a spiritual separation of chief and community, for many chiefs embraced Islam (at least nominally) long before the rest of the people. Thus these chiefs can no longer organize, and rarely even show interest in, the traditional religious ceremonies which weld the community into a single congregation. Nor can they base their authority, hereditary or not, on that spiritual commonness of which it was once an expression. They rely instead more or less openly on the closer association with the Mohammedan rulers of the country with whom they now share the creed—at least one feature of their exalted position. In its ever-increasing scope of proselytizing, Islam drives the wedge of another class distinction into the structure of village society. The distinction between Mohammedans and pagans in a village often has this effect, that the two sections differ not only in religious observances, but also in general mode of life, dress, important food habits (Mohammedans do not drink sorghum-beer, the traditional ceremonial drink of the Nupe peasants), their—often imaginary—educational qualification and, again, in the degree of the affinity they could claim to the highest social stratum in the country.

In other spheres of life—economic, educational—similar influences are at work, striking at the very roots of social homogeneity. But we may cut short our description; we shall meet with these influences again later. Our present discussion has established the main facts. For at least a century and a half the Nupe village did not exist in that self-centred, secure isolation in which the balance of its social system could fulfil

[1] Bribes to the *Etsu* are said to have played an important part in gaining the assent of the king when the new chiefs of Doko usurped the chieftainship.

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the *Alkali*, said one of my informants, and will think nothing of perjuring themselves.

Let me quote a significant instance. [An Ebe man had refused to let his daughter marry a Hausa whom she loved, having a different suitor from Ebe country in mind for her. The Hausa brought the case before the *Alkali* of Kutigi (some 50 miles away); the *Alkali* instructed the father to give his blessing to the marriage on the grounds that the Koran decreed that no father should stand between two young people who loved each other.] The father swore an oath to that effect on the Koran and returned home. But after a month the Hausa came back, reporting that the girl's father had renewed his opposition to the marriage. Three times they were summoned to court, and three times the father agreed in the presence of the *Alkali*, only to revoke his agreement afterwards. At last I happened to be in the court and asked the man if perhaps the Ebe disliked letting their daughters marry outside the sub-tribe or tribe. Evidently relieved, the man said that this was indeed the case. Curiously enough, the girl, who had till then stubbornly maintained her desire to marry the Hausa, declared that she would obey her father as soon as the customary marriage rule was brought up in the court.

This example also illustrates the effects of what I have called above the 'divided law'. The girl and her suitor, well knowing that if they submitted to the customary law as it was upheld by her father and most probably the village elders would not be able to marry, appealed to the Mohammedan court, whose decision, as they anticipated, was favourable to them. Here we see what I have mentioned above—that in districts in which the customary conceptions of law still obtain, modern legislation puts a premium on breaches of the traditional usage. This is shown most clearly in litigation over inheritance. [According to Mohammedan law the property and land left by a family head should be divided equally among the sons; traditional rules of inheritance hold that land and property should be inherited by the younger brother, and that sons and brothers' sons should stay on the land working under the heir as under their sociological father.] This rule expresses the interest of a farming community in maintaining landed property so far as possible intact, while the Mohammedan rule does justice primarily to owners of movable property, money, trade goods, or cattle. Now, for reasons which we shall examine in a later chapter modern economic developments have led increasingly to the adoption of the Mohammedan solution. But were individuals still to attempt to enforce the traditional rule, dissatisfied family members could easily obtain a reversal of this decision by appealing to the Mohammedan court.]

Again we observe the effectiveness of the 'social law' which we have formulated above, that a stronger law ousts a weaker law. The existence of the divided authority which favours 'dissenters' from traditional law, must force chief and elders—the guardians of traditional usage—to surrender in ever larger measure the authority which they are still holding to the stronger authority of the state law, even to invite its intervention—as did the family heads who appealed to their feudal lord for support of their paternal authority. It is important to emphasize this, as

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many Administrative Officers think it desirable that the village chiefs and elders should continue to practise their informal arbitration side by side with the existing official courts. Our data preclude the likelihood of such a parallel development; they show that the tendency is rather towards the virtual surrender of one to the other. We have heard that in the present-day judicial arrangement the Village Head is expected to send all legal cases which cannot be settled by arbitration to the District *Alkali*'s court. Now I have found the chiefs quite satisfied with this state of affairs, which freed them of the responsibility in more serious cases. Some seemed, in fact, quite frightened at the idea of taking over this responsibility themselves, and were only too ready to leave a larger and larger proportion of their judicial tasks to the professional judge. 'To-day', a chief said to me, 'people want written judgements in such cases as divorce, inheritance, debts; *ama mi de takarda à*, but I have no papers to give.' ('Papers' are only the modern symbols of the more powerful and more permanent authority wielded by state jurisdiction; in his own words the chief expressed the essence of that principle of 'divided authority'.

Shall we acquiesce with the chief in these results of an inevitable process of change? I think not. Politically, the chief is divested already of much of his former power. To divest him also of all judicial authority is to deprive him of the last vestige of the most vital prerogative of his office, which is the enforcement of a certain line of conduct upon his community, and to sanction all deviations from it as acts detrimental to the welfare of the community. It would amount to turning the chief completely into a petty executive official, entitled only to carry out orders, but with no right to voice public opinion. Besides, the disregard for local customs by the professional Mohammedan judges is felt as a real hardship by many. Even if more change is on the way, bound to promote the final assimilation of Mohammedan law and customary practice, its pace should be set by the people themselves, and not by an alien, uninterested judge. In the nature of things the solution must lie in a compromise. In my view the best compromise would be to vest the Village Head with the right (and, more important, the duty) to act as an assessor in the court, with full consultative authority, whenever cases from his community are brought before the *Alkali*.[1]

This does not contradict what I have said in a previous section about the 'parochial outlook' of the village chief. The parochial outlook may unfit him for responsible posts in the administration of the Emirate at large, such as District Headship, which call for a wide view and an appreciation of policy on, as it were, a national scale. But it is just this parochial outlook which qualifies the village chief eminently for dealing with legal cases, bound up as they are with local conditions. However, there is a wider issue involved in this question—the most intricate problem which modern administration has to solve, the problem of centralization versus local autonomy.

[1] This solution is envisaged in the Native Courts Ordinance, which leaves it to the discretion of the Native Court to appoint assessors from the ranks of village chiefs and elders.

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adult members. All these factors have in the course of time contributed to make the map of Nupe village land the irregular patchwork it is to-day. 621

At the beginning of this section I have mentioned the possibility that a family head may have to request additional land from the chief for a junior family member for whom he cannot find sufficient land on his own property. To-day this is rarely put into practice, usually only in the extreme case when a whole section of the family, finding the available land near the village insufficient or too poor in quality, sets out to colonize a piece of virgin land and eventually to settle there as founders of a new *tunga*. In the normal case—especially in Trans-Kaduna—when land has to be found for an individual family member, the family head is as a rule expected to possess sufficient land to effect this readjustment. The family head, owning three to four different fields, each of about 4 acres, can, in fact, well afford it in a society with so low a birth-rate. The worst that may happen is that for a time the family head may have too much of his land lying fallow to be able to find additional land for the family member who desires a new farm. It is then that the method of 'borrowing' land is practised. 423 621

Let us consider now more closely the position of the chief with respect to the question of access to village land. Control over the land is part of his political authority. It is, as I called it, an administrative control only, and this is expressed in a balanced, twofold, limitation of the claims to land of chief and community, of the power of the chief to apportion or withhold land, and of the power of the family head to claim and keep land. As regards the former limitation, the chief cannot reasonably withhold land from any claimant of whom the other elders of the community approve. Nor is the chief's own farm-land out of proportion to that of any other family head with an equally large working-group at his command. As regards the latter limitation, the control which the chief retains over all reapportionment of village land is acknowledged whenever the main family land changes hands, that is, in the case of succession to the position and property of a family head.[1] The chief must be informed of all such changes, and in some parts of Nupe he summons at this occasion the family members with their new head and reminds them of their obligations towards each other: the family members, that they will now work on the land of the new family head, and the family head that he has now assumed the responsibility to feed and clothe his people and, some day, to supply them with land of their own. Sometimes a gift to the chief of one pail of whatever crop is just ripe seals the pact. The annual village tax in kind, *dzankd*, which, as we know, was formerly paid to the chief by every family head, is itself a land-tax, a recognition of the chief's control over the village land. It consisted in a gift of one to three bundles of millet or sorghum, the amount varying with the condition of the crop. A complete failure of the crop meant exemption from the *dzankd*. The *dzankd* was thus not regarded as a fixed tax, but rather as 423 622 651 [431]

[1] The succession to the position of family head being, in most cases, identical with the succession to a *nûsa* rank, the procedure described here holds good for both (see p. 50).

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albárka (lit. blessing), a gift meant to express the 'blessing' that lay on the land which the family received from the chief.

Another expression of the chief's control over the reapportionment of land is that all land of families or branches of families which have died out, and similarly the land of families who have emigrated, falls back to the common fund of land reserve administered by the chief. The period within which the land of emigrants still remains theirs is fixed everywhere in Nupe as three years. After that time the chief is entitled to reapportion the land. Should an heir from the emigrated group return after a longer period, he could (like any other stranger) claim land in the village, but not as a rule the same land that his family had held previously. The dying-out of a family, or a branch of a family, seems a fact not easy to establish and always open to doubts in a social system in which small sections repeatedly split off the main body of the family. There is always the chance of an unexpected or belated claimant turning up, representing a distant branch which chief and elders may no longer have reckoned as likely to identify itself with the original family. But this is mainly a theoretical speculation; there occur few such cases in Nupe —none in Trans-Kaduna, where land is plentiful and vacated plots unlikely to be much competed for.

In Cis-Kaduna I witnessed an interesting case of this kind. A family head in Doko had died, leaving a small boy, who was then adopted by a childless brother of the deceased, living in a *tunga* on a farm of his own. The boy grew up on this farm and lived there contentedly until recently, after more than twenty years, the chief reapportioned the apparently unclaimed land that had belonged to the boy's father to two elders of high rank, the *Lile* and *Shaba* (both of the chief's family). Not until then did the young man return to Doko and make a formal claim for his ancestral land. But political motives rather than economic interest were behind this move; the parties in this case were, again, the chief of Doko and young Ndakó Gana, the 'dispossessed' descendant of the line of original chiefs. The chief had reapportioned the land in order to blot out the last visible connexion between the 'pretender's' family and the chieftainship of Doko; and the young man disputed the reapportionment on these very grounds. In the end he received back some of the original land and other new land in addition.

Here we discover a new significance in the apportionment of village land—its connexion with the bestowal of rank or office. This is not surprising in the communities (such as Doko) where the village ranks, like the land, remain in the possession of one 'house'. Later, we shall see more clearly, in the discussion of inheritance, that the Nupe kinship system tends indeed to couple attainment of family headship (which goes with rank) with inheritance of ancestral land. Considering, however, that the ordinary village land does not differ widely in quality and productive value, we can understand that this political aspect of land ownership is rather obscure—save in a case such as the one just quoted where political aspirations have attached to a specific property more than its proper share of symbolic significance. The political aspect becomes more prominent in connexion with a natural resource that shows this

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house he had been staying before, and the latter returns half of the gift to the chief. The next *dzankó* will be the ordinary land-tax of every member of the village community, presented to the chief directly. To-day the first part of the procedure has remained unchanged, except that the application (and sometimes the presents as well) may also be addressed to the District Head.[1] But the annual *dzankó* is now replaced by the Government tax.

The grant of land to strangers never includes the trees growing on the farm-land. They remain the property of the village chief or the other native inhabitants, and this makes the analogy between strangers and adopted household members full: for like the strangers junior family members cannot own trees, although they hold land of their own.[2]

Access to Family Land

This question will be examined in detail later, and no more than a short summary is needed here. Three methods regulate the access of the individual member of the family group to the family land held jointly by the group and administered by the family head. (1) Temporary and restricted access to this land is embodied in the right of every male member, boys as well as adults, to a small plot of his own, which he can work independently. Such plots are called *bucá*, and the individual work on the plots is called *bucá* work. (2) Adult male members of the family group, who have already founded a family of their own, may claim a large farm of the kind that is worked jointly by a number of family members. This farm and farm-work is called *efakó*. (3) The fullest access to family land is embodied in inheritance and in the succession to the position of family head. This position implies control over all family land that the family head holds in his hands. The first two forms of access are 'family affairs' arranged without any formality; the last transaction implies, as we have seen, a formal reference to the chief. The chief's control over the occupied village land is thus made conspicuous not with respect to land that is apportioned on a small scale to individuals for direct use, but with respect to the land that is to be held in trust for future distribution by the new family head. The chief, in other words, as he is bound himself to trusteeship, guarantees the trusteeship undertaken by others. The analogy in the position of chief and family head with respect to land is clearly recognized by the Nupe. Both are heads of corporate groups, and both administrators of the joint rights vested in the groups. Both, moreover, hold the same special, economically significant, right to trees.

[1] I am not sure if this is really prescribed by the regulations. I know that in Agaie Emirate all peasants thought it was. In any case it would save a lot of trouble, should disputes arise later, if one had the District Head for a witness of the original transaction.

[2] This rule also holds good with respect to large groups of alien settlers. In Kutigi, for example, it led to the anomalous position that the Benu settlers, although they had become the political rulers of the community and supplied the chief of 'Greater Kutigi', owned no trees at all in the beginning, and still own very much less than the family heads of the *kintsoši*, the Owners of the Land, that is, the original inhabitants.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
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No junior family member, even when already holding *efakó* land in his own right, may claim any share in the produce of the fruit-bearing trees. Only succession to the family head's position implies the usufructory right to the trees that stand on his or any other parcel of the family land.

Borrowing of Land

Land can be borrowed only for limited periods, as a rule for periods from two to five years, that is, in order to help a temporary shortage of land. The family heads or other 'landlords' arrange the transaction between themselves, not necessarily informing the chief, but always in the presence of witnesses who should be able later to testify to the nature of the transaction. Every landowner who has enough land is ready to 'lend' it in this way. In Trans-Kaduna the transaction is regarded as a friendly act, a 'helping out', quite natural between neighbours or fellow villagers. The borrower pays annually a fixed rent in kind, as a rule one bundle of millet or sorghum. In Cis-Kaduna the transaction gains a definite commercial significance: the borrower pays a small sum of money down, varying with the quality of the land (from 8*d.* for about one acre of ordinary land to 2*s.* for a much smaller plot on valuable marsh-land—the highest amount paid I found to be 6*s.*), and again the annual rent of one bundle or the equivalent in money.[1] In one case I found that regular farm-work for the owner of the land had taken the place of the annual rent in kind.

A landlord is free to cancel the lease before it has lapsed if the tenant is not working the land—as happens frequently; the court would confirm his right to do so, only ordering him to return the initial payment. But it may also happen that the landlord dies or emigrates while the lease is still running, or that for some other reason the lease is not recalled. In such cases the lessee often continues to work the land, although he has naturally ceased to pay the annual rent; he even comes to regard the land as his own whether he is working it or not, till one day it may be demanded back by the original owner or his heirs. In Trans-Kaduna, where no long-term transfer of land exists, any evidence as to the nature of the original transaction will at once settle the case. In the conquered areas of Cis-Kaduna, where land is let and sublet, and where short leases and leases for an indefinite period coexist, it is often difficult to establish clearly whether temporary or permanent lease had been arranged originally, specially when the witnesses of the original contract have died. What type of lease was originally intended is shown by the amount of the initial payment, whether it was high or low, that is, a 'real' payment, or only a *kyutá*, a gratuity. The latter, combined with a repeated rent in kind, establishes the nature of the temporary lease, the *jí aro*, 'borrowing'. But the continued working of the 'borrowed' land, and the failure of the original owner or his heirs to call in the lease, clearly alter the situation considerably. The attitude of the court in such

[1] Characteristically this annual rent is called in Bida—quite logically—*dzankú* 'tithe', but in the villages *kyutá*, 'present'.

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
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With so much variety it is impossible to select a particular community whose rituals would be 'typical' of Nupe practice; rather, each village cycle of rituals is typical (or atypical) in its own way. Yet neither is it possible to describe every variety of Nupe ritual (several of which I only knew from hearsay or from informants' reports). What seems more important is to examine some such cycle of rituals within the setting in which it operates, that is, within the corporate life of the community for which it is primarily valid or, in Nupe parlance, by which it is 'owned'.[1] As regards the question, which particular cycle of rituals to select, I propose to resolve it by taking two instances, one from Doko and the other from Jebba Island. This compromise seems the most expedient both since I have actually observed the majority of rituals in these two places and since these represent an interesting contrast, Doko being a 'typical' inland village, with hereditary chieftainship, and Jebba Island a riverain community where chiefs are elected. Let me add that, from other points of view, both communities are also 'atypical'; Jebba, because it is one of the two villages possessing major 'relics' of Tsoede; and Doko, because it formerly belonged to a federation of villages (or 'towns' as the Nupe would say), which type of political organization is unique in Nupe country. As regards the two communities themselves, a full description has been given elsewhere and need not be repeated.[2]

One further point of more general import may be anticipated. In spite of the great variety of local cults the number of rituals performed and their place in the year's cycle do not differ greatly in the different communities. Usually there are one or two movable rituals, rarely more, and two or three fixed rituals, only a few villages having four or five; and though the dates of the fixed rituals vary somewhat from place to place, they fall more frequently in certain months (e.g. the 9th and 11th) than in others (e.g. the 3rd or 5th).[3] The corresponding months in our calendar, incidentally, can only be calculated approximately since the Nupe reckon in lunar months, the year beginning with the onset of the rains, and insert a 13th month every five years. In other years the 1st month is usually also called the 13th, especially when the rains are late, which not infrequently leads to confusion, some localities being temporarily a month out in their reckoning.[4]

[1] I am here using the phrase 'primarily valid' since certain rituals imply an additional, wider validity (or 'ownership') which extends to the whole sub-tribe or even tribe. This point will be examined later (see below, p. 103).

[2] See *A Black Byzantium*, pp. 19, 25, 35. [3] See the chart on p. 69.

[4] In 1934, for example, the 1st month was taken to have begun on March 15th in the eastern part of Nupe, but at the end of April I found that the people of Mokwa, in the west, had just started with their 1st month. For a fuller description of the Nupe calendar, see *A Black Byzantium*, Appendix V.

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
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This roughly uniform timing of the fixed rituals might suggest that they are bound up with important seasonal events, farming activities and the like, which are similarly uniform throughout the country. The 9th month, which is so regularly accompanied by rituals, in fact represents a crucial phase in the life of a farming people, coinciding with the end of the rains and the time of the sorghum harvest, the staple crop of the country. But the 11th month, which falls in the middle of the dry season, coincides only with a minor agricultural activity, the harvesting of the last bean crop. Conversely, an important agricultural phase, the 1st (or 13th) month, when rains and planting begin, is infrequently accompanied by ceremonials. Other dates marked by rituals in different communities coincide with the first millet harvest (5th month), with the first yam harvest (7th month), or fall in the early rains (3rd month), when nothing in particular happens.

The Nupe rituals are thus neither firmly linked with important agricultural activities nor yet concentrated in the season when farmwork is at a standstill, when the granaries are full, and when the people have both food and time to spare. But there is a nexus of a more general kind; for the Nupe rituals tend to be associated with the reaping of the crops more than with the planting, with 'ends' more than with 'beginnings', bearing upon the renewal of the fertility of which one has just received a token rather than upon attempts to secure it at the outset. The subsequent discussion will bear out this view. Here we must note that the ceremonials which happen to coincide with this or that harvest are in no way strict first-fruit rites, meant to signal the proper time for reaping or to control the first consumption of the new food; nor yet are they special feasts of thanksgiving. Rather is their religious import more unspecific, bearing on fertility, the thriving of crops, and health in general, irrespective of the particular occasion.

2. THE INLAND VILLAGE

(i) *Priestship*

The list of Doko rituals is brief. There are two movable ones —*fitakũ* ('The Stone drinks') and *Dibo Saba* (named after an ancestor chief),—and three fixed rituals: *ɨiba*, which is performed twice, in the 5th and 9th month; *sakó*, performed one month after the first *ɨiba*; and *gunnu*, performed in the 11th month.[1]

The ceremonials are in the charge of different officiants. The ritual *Dibo Saba*, addressed to an ancestor chief, is also performed by the chief. The ritual *sakó* concerns only the small group of

[1] In our calendar the 5th month corresponds roughly to July–August, the 9th to December, the 11th to February.

3: Forde E-4 (no date) 1955 FF52 Nupe FF52

between the central administration and the Fulani, counts Fulani cattle and collects *jangali* (cattle tax).[30]

The Districts of Ilorin Province with a mixed Nupe and Yoruba population sometimes had two District Heads. When Sharagi District was placed in Ilorin Emirate (*c.* 1913) the Nupe chief (*Ndakpoto*) was made District Head, though he is said to have had no control over the people as a whole. The Igbona Yoruba head (*Olupo*) is said to have been effective among the Yoruba. The District Heads of Lafiagi and Pategi are called *Rani*, that of Kupa *Makun*, of Kakanda *Agantshu*, and of Shaku *Kpotun*.[31]

Village Organization

Every Nupe village constitutes a separate political entity, each with its own head (*žitsu*) who " owns " the village, controls its main resources and the lives of its inhabitants, and often assumes its name. In Jebba and Mokwa the position of head is filled by the promotion of one of the senior elders of the village. Elsewhere it is hereditary in one house (*emi*). In either case the appointment has to be confirmed by the *Etsu* Nupe. The interregnum before the appointment of the new head is filled by a high ranking elder, *ndeji*, " father of the town." Some villages have heads officially appointed by the administration who are distinct from the traditional heads, called *Etsu nyenkpa* (" money," i.e., tax, " chief ") as opposed to *žitsu*, " town chief." In some riverain villages, e.g., Funga, Nantu, Batachi, Edogi, and Badeggi, the village head is called *gago*, a title said to be used by Hausa speakers.[32]

The Basa-Nge of Igala Division are divided into 14 inland and riverain units under a village headman responsible to the *anaja* (?District Head). These headmen are chosen by the elders of each unit, but their appointment is subject to the approval of the *Ata* Gala, from whom many of them hold titles and beads of office.[33]

The village head is responsible for the appointment of the village elders from the ranks of the family heads, the control and apportionment of land, and the enforcement of fishing rights. He organizes and partly finances certain religious rites linked with chiefship, though he is not regarded as the religious head of the community. He arbitrates in disputes and has certain limited and informal judicial powers; he also organizes any concerted action of the community or large-scale work such as road-making. Formerly he had special prerogatives and still receives annual gifts in kind in some small villages.

The village head is assisted by a council of elders (*ŋusaži*, sing. *ŋusa*, the " old ones," or *žiciži*, the " titled ones ") who act as mouthpieces, agents, and informants of the chief. They are the heads of families or groups of families who live together in one ward (*efu*). Their titles are conferred on them by the chief, some titles reflecting the occupation followed by the elder and his family. The position of an elder as head of a specific group is recognized by the community, as is the division of the affairs of the village between a number of elders.

In villages where the headship is hereditary, important priestly offices are not usually identified with political office, the office of village priest (*žigi*) being kept in the junior branch of the house. *Žitsu* and *žigi*, " town chief " and " town priest," often appear in genealogies as elder and younger brother in the classificatory sense. In those villages where the head is elected from the senior title-holders, religious ceremonies are performed by the elder who is entrusted with the rule of the village during an interregnum and whose office is hereditary, so that instead of there being a hereditary chief there is, as it were, a hereditary " king-maker."

[30] Notes on Bida Emirate, 1936.
[31] Biscoe, 1918; Notes on Kakanda District, 1934.
[32] Rochfort Rae, 1921; Notes on Kakanda District, 1934. The title *gago* is also found in the Kamberi areas north of the Nupe country. Mathews (1936) says that it is generally used by Hausa speakers to mean village head. In Bargery's Hausa dictionary the meaning is given as ' a pagan chief.'
[33] Hopkins, 1934.